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April 24, 2003

Secretary Colin Powell
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520-0001

Dear Secretary Powell,

I write to express my deep concern about reported actions of the U.S. delegation at the recent U.N. Commission on the Status of Women in New York City last month.

At key moments in the negotiations for the agreed conclusions on violence against women and human rights, the U.S. called for the deletion of crucial paragraphs. It is my understanding that much of the language discussed at the Commission was already agreed upon language from previous conferences in Cairo, Beijing, etc. Unfortunately, the United States sided with Iran, Pakistan, and Sudan when they called for the deletion of contentious paragraphs which included this language.

One paragraph of particular note which was **opposed** by Iran, Pakistan, and Sudan stated that countries would agree to:

***“condemn violence against women and refrain
from invoking any custom, tradition or religious
consideration to avoid their obligations with
respect to its elimination as set out in the Declaration
on the Elimination of Violence against Women.”***

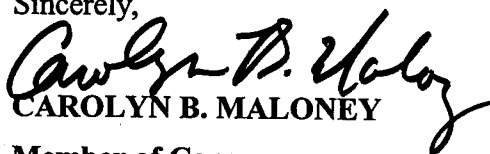
I was deeply disturbed to learn that the U.S. sided with these countries and would show support for such draconian, harmful, and disrespectful positions put forth by a “*member of the Axis of Evil*” which blatantly denies the rights of women and uses specific customs and traditions to justify abusive behavior.

Further, it is my understanding that the U.S. remained intransigent throughout the meeting, refusing to agree to the most crucial language supported by the majority of countries. As a result, this was the first time in the history of this U.N. body that the thematic issues that were addressed were not agreed to and consensus was not reached.

Finally, I have learned that the delegation, headed by Ellen Sauerbrey, seemed to be focused on how violence against women impacts businesses and employers. I am concerned that at a commission to discuss *victims* of violence, the U.S. delegation seemed to be more interested in the impact of violence on employers and their economic viability.

I hope you can clarify the position of the United States and explain why the delegation aligned with Iran and others on these issues which will impact the lives of women and girls around the world. Moreover, I cannot reconcile your statement in the recent April 2003 edition of *State Magazine* with the positions taken by the U.S. at this Commission meeting ["Brutality against women, the mutilation of women, trafficking in women and rape can never be justified, whatever the circumstances, creed, country, or culture" (2)] I would appreciate clarification and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,


CAROLYN B. MALONEY

Member of Congress